

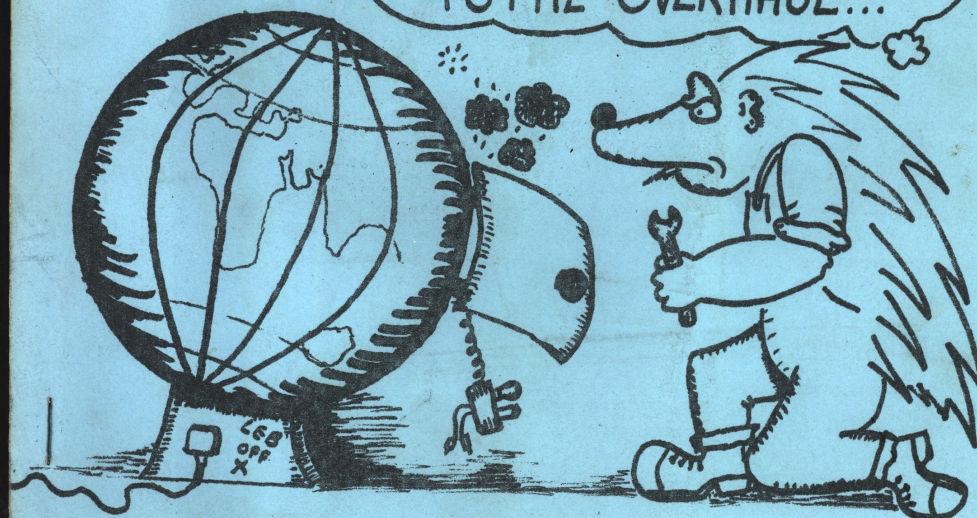
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solidarity

DOUBLE
ISSUE

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ITALY... CZECHOSLOVAKIA
PORTUGAL ... SPAIN ...
HMM... LOOKS ABOUT TIME FOR A
TOTAL OVERHAUL...



PORTUGUESE DIARY

April 19, 1976, a Radio Televisao Portugues crew, in a van, is doing a programme on 'the vision of socialism'. It is stopping in the street, at factory gates, in markets, talking to people and recording their replies. It's a tight fit inside: 7 people and lots of equipment.

We make for Barreiro, an industrial town across the river from Lisbon. Once there, there is no problem getting to the giant GUF chemical works. The sky is grey, part cloud, part smoke. The walls are grey too, but bespattered with the red of posters. The plant, the stacks, the water towers hovering above us look as if built in the last century. Long streets of hangars, stores, sheds, many with broken windows. There is noise, and rust and the plaster is peeling off the front of many buildings. Heavy smells hang in the air. The road is in poor repair. An old-fashioned capitalism clearly cohabits with the new.

We pass through mean little streets of minute, decrepit terraced housing. 'Sulphuric Acid Street.' 'Candle Grease Street.' Capitalism even murders the imagination. The houses were built six, seven decades ago, possibly more. People still live there - sort of.

This is the heartland of the PCP, its ideological and physical domain. It's posters are everywhere. A gigantic PCP balloon is tied to a rope between two rooftops. 'Unity with the MFA'. 'Vote PCP'. The van stops and the crew take up their positions near one of the back gates. Shifts are changing. It is 4 pm. The producer talks to a group of women of indeterminate age, going in. They are not in the least shy and talk readily. 'Socialism?' - 'A steady job!' - 'Like this?' - No answer. A steady drizzle is falling. 'Like this?' the producer repeats. The women, sensing something strange, turn on him, abuse the television, and march off, their fists raised, shouting 'PCP! PCP!'.

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There are joyful moments, too. Walking along the Tagus waterfront, between the Station and the Praca do Comercio we stop in front of a particularly fine example of mural art. Enormous. Unforgettable. 'Socialist realism' at its hideous best.

The reds and yellows are gaudy as usual - caricatures of real colour. The oppressed have very square jaws, very short hair, enormous arms, a very determined look. The proletariat, as seen by the Maoists is clearly more brawn than brain; the sort of animal any skilful Leninist could easily ride to the revolution!

1º MAIO VERMELHO

COM A PRESENÇA DO CAMARADA ANSELMO MATOS
C. DO ORIENTAL MARVILA MRPP
CONFRATERNIZAÇÃO POPULAR 10H
CONÍCIO 17H
MANIFESTAÇÃO



- 3 -

But the anarcho-cynicalists have been at work. Modern capitalism requires modern transport. The MRPP leader is calling for a cab.

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Another story about taxis. In Elvas, in the East some of the estates belonging to big landlords have been taken over by those who work them. The usual pattern is for the agricultural workers to occupy first and seek authority later - from the local center of the IRA (Institute for Agricultural Reorganisation.)

One recently expropriated latifundaria (latifundista in Spanish) also happened to own the biggest taxi business in town. His drivers disliked him heartily and were much impressed with the new goings on in the co-operative. So they took over the taxis.

But the cult of authority dies hard. The act had to be 'legitimised', entered 'in the books'. So the cab drivers all turn up one morning at the IRA Headquarters for an 'official' sanction. The Ministry of Agriculture has files on tenants, trees, torcs... and technical aid - but nothing on how legally to appropriate a fleet of taxis. The Revolution creates its own surrealist precedents.

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May Day, 1976. Top of the Avenida Almirante Reis in Lisbon. The demonstration called by Intersindical is marching past. Municipal workers in their Sunday best. Railway workers in serried ranks, decorated lorries packed with agricultural workers carrying pitchforks. Occasional singing. Very occasional laughter. Sellers do a roaring trade in political stickers, selling to those watching the procession: stickers for the Association of Collectivised Farms, for the Housing Fund, for student or women's groups. Schoolteachers, building workers, hospital workers chant 'Intersindical, Intersindical' as they pass, ten or twelve abreast. Twenty thousand people march by - apparently far fewer than last year. The traffic has prudently been stopped, although Portuguese motorists have learnt patience - the hard way.

It is a fine warm day. Banners, unbelievably, still demand 'Unity with the MFA' - the very MFA which is now the main brake on the revolution. They also demand the right to full employment and vigilance against the fascists.

Do I sense a certain weariness? There is none of the exaltation, of the euphoria of even a few months ago - as if people realised that it would take more mural graffiti to bring down the walls of capital. The Party is everywhere, though nowhere in its true garb. In the Association of University Professors. In the Association of Municipal Associations. The bank employees march by shouting 'No to Reaction!' One or two Tenants' Committees carry colourful banners... demanding government loans. The two groups march next to each other. Someone should introduce them to one another!

At the end of the procession a mass of red flags and a few hundred very young people shouting raucously: 'Unidad sindical, unida sindical'. One might be dreaming. They want the PCP and IS to take power, in order to expose them. And Intersindical too. To form a government 'without generals or capitalists'. Yes, the Trots. In their rightful place. At the tail-end of a Stalinist demonstration.

M.B.



from A LETTER FROM PORTUGAL

Trot pretending to share the illusions he attributes to the proletariat

... The LCI-PRT presented, together, a "worker-candidate" - a woman who had been a prisoner in Caxias and who had joined LCI soon before Nov. 25th. She was dynamic and told of her imprisonment. After presenting the candidate and formalising everything the prison authorities let the cat out of the bag: she'd been imprisoned for stealing a fridge. The Trots thought this disgraceful (as they'd thought she was a "political" prisoner) and abandoned the whole idea. The current joke is that the Trots are like the "paras": mislead all the time. They're now supporting Octavio Pato (PCP - translated literally as the 8th duck - as a few newspapers have pointed out). Otelo is getting more support than Art Sullivan or a pop-star would: he is colourful.

"I've never read the whole of Capital" he said to a crowd of 50,000 in Porto "but I get the idea". Pinheiro de Azevedo says the official report on Nov. 25th "shocked him as to the lies a government could tell" and threatens to squeal on everyone if he is not elected. Its a farce. But Eanes is very very dangerous and can be used by all sorts. It may have very surprising results, this election...

RECENT PAMPHLETS

THE NEW MOVEMENT (10p plus postage) by Henri Simon. The movement emerging out of struggles now. 'The New Movement is not what some... can think of to liberate others. The New Movement is what each and all create by themselves in their struggle, for their struggle, in their own interest...'

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF MARX (10p plus postage) by John Crump. A joint Solidarity/Social Revolution pamphlet. '... the communist ideology which Marx elaborated was precisely what he himself meant by the term "ideology" - a set of ideas which (even when intrinsically correct) mask rather than reveal the real problem...'

SPONTANEITY AND ORGANISATION (10p plus postage) by Murray Bookchin. A reprint of this thought provoking essay first published in Liberation and Anarchos magazines in 1972. 'The tragedy of the socialist movement is that opposes organisation to spontaneity and tries to assimilate the social process to political and organisational instrumentalism'.

COUNTER-CULTURE & REPRESSION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

It is accepted by libertarians that the social revolution involves the most profound cultural revolution. This is implicitly accepted by ruling elites who at the best disparage and at the worst openly repress any signs of grass-roots cultural non-conformity. In Britain the authorities are experienced enough to co-opt or recuperate much of the counter-culture. Part of the resilience of the British elite lies in the pragmatic clothes of ruling class ideology. This flexibility is precluded by the dogmatic nature of the ruling ideology in Czechoslovakia. Here the shining ideals of socialism cannot hide the rottenness of everyday existence. The gap between official pronouncements on the ever-increasing beauty of everyday life and the realities of repression, inflation, cultural conformity, bribery, shortages, official incompetence and bureaucratic hussling warp and distort the lives of the whole nation. For this reason, any movement that even implicitly gives the lie to the official double-think machine draws upon itself the whole odium of the state. The decaying corpse cannot bear the fresh flowers growing on the nutrient of its disintegration.

At the end of March this year about 20 members of two counter-culture groups were arrested. The arrests of the 'Plastic People of the Universe' and 'DG-307' were reported in the western press but little was said about the background to the arrests or what exactly the groups were supposed to have done. I do not want to eulogise these particular groups, Solidarity readers will be all too familiar with the deficiencies of the western counter-culture movement of the 1960's. These reservations apply equally to that of eastern Europe. But the fact of a counter-culture eight years after social conformity had been reinforced by Soviet tanks is in itself remarkable enough.

The Plastic People are, in fact, one of the oldest underground groups, having been formed in 1967. DG-307 is a much more recent formation. One of the regime's rationalisations about 'normalisation' is that they have succeeded in stabilising the economy and have in fact increased the availability of consumer goods and the purchasing power of the population. In short, the regime has established a form of 'communist consumerism'. DG-307 refers to the medical code for a 'disease' characterised by temporary mental disturbance brought about in otherwise normal people by high stress. The main emphasis of this group's work is the boredom and sterility of life in the new communist consumer society. However the Plastic People were the forerunners of groups like this and it is on them that the police have concentrated most of their attention.

The importance that the authorities attached to the arrests can be judged from the fact that on April 7 and 8 there was a saturation coverage in the press and on radio and TV. The Minister of the Interior's justification makes interesting reading for those who can read between the lines of East European official statements: 'Far from being musicians, poets or artists, they were a band of delinquent drug addicts, drop-outs, parasites, malingersers, failed

priests and psychiatric cases who, under the pretext of holding 'musical' concerts, indulged in orgies of dope-taking and wanton destruction of property. Their songs were full of obscenities and could scarcely be considered music at all since almost none of those arrested had any formal musical education." He went on to argue that every society had the right to defend itself against such anti-social elements. It was only after all other attempts to discourage them by preventative 'educational' means had failed that the authorities had resorted to arrest. It is interesting to see exactly what the Minister had in mind when he talked of 'preventative education'. In 1971, as a result of new standards laid down for rock groups, the Plastic People lost their professional status. In other words they could no longer work as musicians. In Czechoslovakia the 'Right to Work' means that if you are unemployed for more than eight weeks you can be sent to prison. The consequence was that the group had to work at non-musical jobs. The authorities hoped that this would kill the group. However they continued to play in their spare time, in cellars, private flats, empty rooms etc. The content of the group's work is the main point of interest. By 1972 they had just about stopped importing music from British and American groups and they started to put contemporary Czech poetry to music. Unfortunately, as far as I know, there are no English translations of the type of work they chose. It did consist, however, of poems of the last 20 years and most of it was an attack on 'official culture'.

The arrest and harassment of 20 individuals, followed by a national propaganda exercise to justify this action is symptomatic of a profound sickness in social life. Contemporary Stalinism is a most powerful generator of alienation. The forms of social domination have been changed but the social relations in terms of the people's alienation from the products of their labour have been reinforced, and reinforced on a scale yet unknown in the West. The meaning of the failure of Soviet agriculture, of the obsolete Czech economy, of the massive loans required by Poland from the West is that the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are working to rule. This is the crisis of Stalinism. It is the key to understanding why in the Soviet Union, combine harvesters stand idle two thirds of the time when they are required. (H. Ticktin in Critique 4) In Czechoslovakia the rot in public morale shows itself in more sophisticated ways. The price of secure entry into a medical school for a student is the payment of a car or a country cottage to a university administrator. Unthinking sabotage is the norm. In Nov. 1975, the President of Czechoslovakia opened a new steel smelting factory with electronic control systems imported from W. Germany. Very soon the control system broke down... It was found that 140,000 D.Marks worth of electronic equipment had been stolen. The police later found that this equipment had been converted into musical amplifiers by the local youth union!

It is against this background, well known and deeply worrying to the authorities, of total demoralisation that the existence of the counter-culture must be seen. The innate creativity of the people has not been totally suppressed, it continues to find alternative ways of expressing itself. This is the real meaning of the counter-culture, and it is a meaning that frightens the authorities shitless.

P. Cerny (London)

SPAIN: TWO DOCUMENTS

- 8 -

The following material gives us an insight into some problems and the responses to them of the Spanish working class. Faced with a state controlled union and a vicious regime they have in recent months taken steps along the path of autonomous self-organisation. Since the death of Franco a wave of strikes demands for amnesty for political prisoners and demands for 'democratic reforms' of one sort and another have shaken the rulers of Spain in a way they have not been shaken since the days of the Republic. As the number of people involved in various struggles has increased, the forms of the struggle have changed. The following piece on the Barcelona Telephones illustrates a movement from the Workers Commissions to a more widely democratic assembly structure. The second piece, from the Barcelona docks, illustrates some of the difficulties that face these assemblies. Conversations with people who have recently come from Spain have revealed how rapidly things are moving there. We will try and bring any further developments to our reader's notice. One point that should be made immediately perhaps is that the C.N.T., the anarcho-syndicalist union, has been reconstituted inside Spain and is growing rapidly. Already, however, an internal debate has developed sparked off by younger militants who consider its 1930's style structure over-bureaucratic and are pressing for a reorganisation which increases branch autonomy. This pressure stems directly from their experience of the workers assemblies. At the same time the state controlled union is making attempts to incorporate this and other developing dissident unions. In Spain, as everywhere, autonomous action and recuperation dance their minuet.

Barcelona telephones

This article is based on an interview with a cable worker earlier this year. He is one of 54,000 telephone workers in Spain of which 8,400 are in Catalonia (5,300 in Barcelona). The telephone company is 44% owned by the government, 26% by the workers and private shareholders and the rest by IIT. Before the strike this year there had been one isolated dispute in 1973 involving 800 workers.

'In January our collective contract was up. The cost of living had gone up a lot but the Company told us that the new contract would take another 3 - 4 months to come through. We asked for an advance payment but this was refused so we started to organise around the demand for 6,000 pesetas increase until the new contract was agreed. This struggle was led by the Comisiones Obreras (Workers Commissions, CCOO for short) of which I am a member.

'Our CO was formed by those most interested in defending the interests of the working class. In general they were people from political parties of various tendencies. Altogether there are 40 - 50 people out of which particular committees are elected: Strike Committee, Information Committee etc. In meetings of the body of the workers the members of the CCOO do everything they can to develop the struggle. The CCOO meet in churches and empty buildings and one of our meetings took place in a college. Because the CCOO are clandestine they have to take security measures. The news of a meeting is passed privately from person to person. During the meetings someone keeps watch to see if there is any movement by the police outside or anything suspicious. The strike committee has the job of approaching the workers to explain the necessity for a strike and the best ways of struggling against the company. It calls assemblies of the workers. The Information Committee has the job of publicising the struggle and keeping the workers informed.

'In January we went on strike. We began on a Tuesday with a stoppage of half an hour which was to progress day by day to reach a total stoppage by the Saturday. But the Strike Committee called off the strike after four days and accepted an offer of 4,000 pesetas rather than the 6,000 we wanted. We had said that we would only go back to work if a general assembly of the workers decided on it. But rumours began circulating that some workers had already gone back to work and that we'd lost the struggle. Co-ordination between Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao functioned badly and this was the main reason why the strike was not continued; even the time of the stoppage was not co-ordinated between the various districts. By April we were on strike again, however. Given the breakdown of the previous strike we discussed in a general assembly of the workers the best methods of continuing the struggle. It was decided that in order to avoid rumours which could destroy unity we should have assemblies in each work place which would elect a delegate to a co-ordinating committee which would meet in the evenings. (This general assembly took place in the state controlled union building, incidentally.)

'The Company now said that the new contract would take 5 - 6 months to work out rather than the 2 - 3 months they had originally said. We decided to enter into struggle again. This time our organisation was different. In January the strike was started and led by the CO. But this meant in practice that 40 - 50 people could direct a struggle that belonged to all the workers. In April all the workers took part in the struggle through their assemblies in the workplaces. We held a general assembly which decided on strike action. Initially, however, only some 20% of the workforce in Barcelona and Catalonia came out on strike. Madrid had been on strike for two days though it was not complete. In Barcelona, however, more and more people joined the struggle every day and after 4 days 90% of the plant was out. At the general assembly we had decided that there should be a committee To Extend the Strike and another Committee of Information. The 'Committee of Extension' had the job of keeping in touch with and travelling to discuss with workers in Catalonia Madrid and Bilbao (where the struggle was strongest). The Information Committee published many leaflets explaining the aims of the strike and gave news to the press. The leaflets were distributed at peaceful demonstrations where 4,000 workers went to different working class districts, the city centre,

the markets. Here the Information Committee explained the struggle to the Neighbourhood Associations (Asociaciones de Vecinos) and other committees and social centres.

'One reason why the Company would not give into our demands was because the exchanges were automatic. We decided to sabotage the connections between the major towns by making calls in such numbers as to jam the lines. In Barcelona we were able to jam 60,000. We intended to keep the most important lines open but we were evicted from the exchanges and were unable to do so. We explained this in leaflets we handed out. The French, English and Italian unions gave us support through CIT. 40% of international calls were boycotted and by the Sunday it was planned that it would be a total boycott. Unfortunately this did not come about, as we shall see.

'At the beginning of the struggle we stayed in the social centres but the police threw us out. We then gathered in the Plaza Cataluna (the central square in Barcelona). We went in groups passing out leaflets and information bulletins to passers-by. If there was a company near an Exchange people would go and explain why we were striking. We organised collections for each Exchange. Unfortunately, though, the strike collapsed. The strike looked as though it would continue over the holidays (Holy Week) which made things difficult. Then, at the last assembly it was learned that the contract had been taken to the Labour Court and the Company had announced that those workers who did not return to work while the Court was sitting would be dismissed. Then on Holy Thursday the Company gave us until mid-day to return to work and threatened dismissal for all those who did not. People began to be afraid and in many Exchanges they returned to work.

'It is worth making some further comments. The political parties played no important role in the strike since they had no longer the means to control the strike through the CCOO. The new "struggle committees" meant that the CCOO could not direct the struggle but had to accept the will of the assembly. Ideally the CCOO should co-ordinate the struggles within the company and with other companies as an independent workers' movement. At the present time they are unable to do this because they are manipulated by the political parties. At the present time we are waiting to see what sanctions the Company will take against the workers who went on strike and we will then take counter-measures.'

WOMEN IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

(10p plus postage) by Liz Willis. As the author points out: 'it cannot be assumed that when historians write about "people" or "workers" they mean women to anything like the same extent as men'. The pamphlet highlights some of the aspects, both positive and negative, in this largely ignored area.

Barcelona docks

The following piece is taken from a clandestine dockers' newspaper: 'We think it would be a good thing to think about the latest conflicts we have seen in the docks, even if we can't cover everything. We might come up with some solutions which could serve us in future struggles.'

'The Assembly, as a means of discussing all our problems must be the standard way of resolving all the situations that face us. The assembly must not be monopolised by anyone. Everyone should take part in it to combat the passivity of the majority. This passivity often stems from the difficulty of hearing and understanding the person speaking although we have some little experience of this kind of meeting. Some technical measures might help - for example a megaphone. We should have someone, not necessarily always the same person to act as chairman co-ordinating the discussion and synthesising ideas to make discussion easier.'

'Information. People who are elected at assemblies as representatives and are charged with a particular task should keep the assembly continuously informed. Elected representatives must propose only what the assembly has decided, adding nothing. We saw in the last conflict how information was not brought to the assembly. Our first demands voted by the assembly were changed to others in view of the negative response of the boss and we were not informed.'

'The Strike. This showed that dockers can unite at a given moment in response to the injustices of the bosses, the authorities and the union bureaucrats. But the assembly at which it was decided to return to work was an example of what we should not allow to happen. During the whole meeting we allowed the bureaucrats to say what they liked. There were people who had nothing to do with us or our problems reminding us constantly of the danger involved in continuing the stoppage and making all kinds of threats. Promises were made - on condition we didn't make too much noise and behaved ourselves - promises that the bosses couldn't and didn't want to carry out. At that assembly we voted that we would not give way over our proposals and we called for the dismissal of inefficient union representatives. Yet our point were not agreed to, neither were there any representatives removed. Everything had been got back to normal - yet we did not go back on strike.'

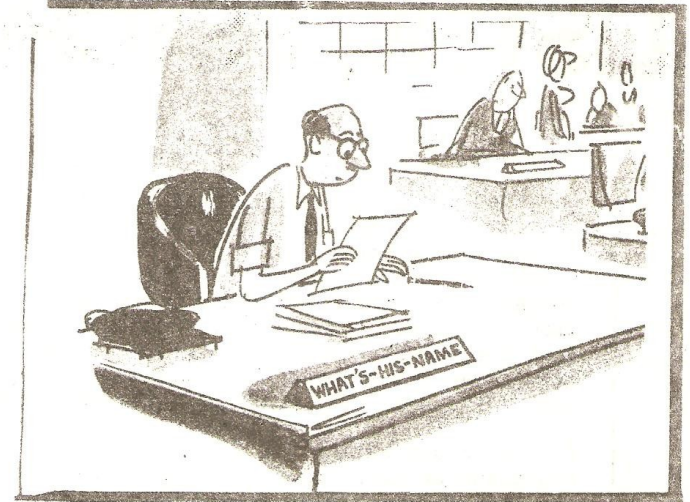
I alone can create it to my own measure, as has happened to me before and may happen to me again. But in everyday life, as it impinges upon me and upon others, I find myself up against a mass of things I can't accept. I say these things are not inevitable, and that they depend upon the way society is organised.

Firstly, I want and I ask that my work have some meaning. I want to approve of its purpose and of how it is done. I want genuinely to involve myself in it, to make use of my faculties, to be a more complete person, to develop myself. I hold that this would be possible, for me and for all others, if society were organised differently. It would already be a big change in that direction if I were allowed to decide (along with everyone else) what I have to do and (together with those I work with) how to do it.

I (and all of us) want to know what is going on in society, to control the extent and the quality of the information we are given. I want to take part, directly, in all the social decisions which will affect my existence, or which help shape the world in which I live. I don't accept that my fate should be decided, day after day, by people whose plans are hostile (or simply unknown) to me, and for whom I and everyone else are but figures in a plan or pawns on a chessboard. I reject the fact that, at the limit, my life and my death should be in the hands of people of whom I know that they can't see either me or others.

I know that bringing about a new kind of social organisation and making it live won't be easy. There will be difficult tasks at every turn. But I would prefer to get to grips with real problems than with the cynicism, double-talk or manipulations of our leaders. Should we fail in our endeavour, I would prefer failure in a meaningful attempt to a state of affairs which remains permanently on the wrong side of either failure or non-failure, that is simply derisory.

I want to meet others as an equal, and yet as someone absolutely different, not as a numbered object, not as a frog perched on another rung (whether higher or lower is of little matter) in the hierarchy of income and power. I want to see others, and for them to see me, as another human being; that our relationship be not a battleground of aggressions, that



our rivalry remain within the limits of the game, that our conflicts (inasmuch as they can't be resolved or surmounted) be about real problems and real stakes, that they carry as little unconscious material as possible, that they be burdened as little as possible with things that are unreal. I wish that others may be free, for my freedom begins where that of others begins. (2) Alone, at best, I can only be 'virtuous in misfortune'. I don't count on people becoming angels, nor do I expect their souls to be as pure as mountain lakes - which incidentally have always bored me stiff. But I know how much our present set-up aggravates people's problems of existence - and of existence with others - and how vastly it increases the obstacles to our freedom.

I know for certain that my wish can't be realised today. Even were the revolution to take place tomorrow, my wish would not be fully achieved within my lifetime. I know that one day men and women will live for whom even the memory of problems which today cause us great anguish will no longer exist. That is my destiny. I have to accept it, and I do. But that does not reduce me either to despair or to a state of catatonic rumination. Wanting what I do, I can only act so as to bring it about. And I am already partly fulfilling myself in the choice that I make of the main interests in my life, in the work and time I put into trying to change things - a work full of significance for me (even if I meet in it - and have to accept - partial failure, delays, détours, tasks that have no meaning in themselves). I enjoy my participation in a collective of revolutionaries which tries to overcome the reified and alienated relationships of present-day society. If I had been born into a communist society, would happiness have come more easily my way? I don't know - and I can't do anything about it anyway. But I will not, under that pretext, spend all my time glued to a TV set or reading thrillers.

Does my attitude reflect a refusal of the reality principle? But what is the content of that principle? Must one work? Must work necessarily be deprived of meaning, embody exploitation, always contradict its claimed objectives? Is the reality principle valid, in that form, for someone living on unearned income? For the inhabitants of Samoa? Up to what point does the reality principle reflect nature and where does it begin to reflect society? Up to what point does it manifest society as such, and from where on a given form of society? Is the critical point serfdom? The galleys? The concentration camps? From where would a philosophy acquire the



"I DREAMT I MET JOE HILL LAST NIGHT..."

(2) French school children have been taught for generations that 'individual freedom ends where the freedom of others begins'.
(Solidarity footnote)

right to tell me: 'here, at this precise level of existing institutions, I will show you the frontier between phenomenon and essence, between temporary historical forms and the eternal kernel of social systems'? I accept the reality principle because I accept work (as long, that is, as it is real - which each day becomes less evident) and the need for work to be socially organised. But I reject the invocation of a pseudo-psychoanalysis or of a pseudo-metaphysics which smuggle into the precise discussion of historical possibilities gratuitous affirmations about 'impossibilities' concerning which it knows precisely nothing.

Would such a wish be infantile? But the infantile situation is surely that in which everything in life is given to you, in which the Law is handed down to you. In the infantile situation you have life for no obvious reason and the Law is given on its own, with nothing more. No discussion is possible. What I want is the very opposite. It is to make my own life, to give life if possible, in any case to give for my life. I don't want the Law just handed down to me. I want, at one and the same time, to create it and to give it to myself. It is not the revolutionary who is permanently in the infantile situation. It is the conformist, or the non-political person. It is those who accept the Law without discussing it, without wishing to take part in its creation. Those who live in society with no thoughts about how it functions, with no political will, have only replaced their personal father with an anonymous social one.

What is infantile is the state of affairs where one receives without giving. It is the state where one does, or is, just in order to receive. What I want, to start with, is a fair exchange. Later, I want to go beyond exchange. The infantile situation is the dual relationship, the illusion of a fusion. It is today's society which is constantly infantilising everyone, by its fusion of the imaginary with unreal entities: leaders, cosmonauts, pop stars, national interest. I want society to cease at last to be a family (which is false, furthermore, to the point of being grotesque) and for it to acquire its proper dimension, namely a network of relationships between autonomous adults.

Is this a lust for power on my part? But what I want is to abolish power in the current sense of the word: I want power for all. Power in its present sense means thinking of and treating other people as things. Everything I want runs contrary to this. Those for whom others are things are themselves things. I don't want to be a thing, either for my own sake or for that of others. I don't want others to be things: I wouldn't know what to do with them. If I can exist for others, and be recognised by them, I don't want it to be because I have something external to me: power. Nor do I want to exist only in their imagination. The recognition of others is valid for me only inasmuch as I myself recognise them. Would I run the risk of forgetting all this, should events ever bring me close to the exercise of power? It seems to me most improbable. If it came about, it would be a battle lost, not the end of the war. Am I going to regulate my whole life upon the assumption that I may one day regress into childhood?

Am I pursuing an illusion, that of wanting to eliminate the tragic side of human existence? It seems to me, on the contrary, that I am seeking to eliminate the melodrama from life, the false tragedy - the one where unnecessary catastrophes occur, where all would have been different if only the actors had known this, or done that. It is a macabre farce that people should be dying of hunger in India, while in America and Europe governments penalise farmers who produce 'too much'. It is a Grand Guignol show, in which both corpses and suffering are real. But this is not tragedy: there is nothing inescapable about it. And if one day humanity perishes under H-bombs, I will refuse to call it tragedy; I will call it a monstrous fuck-up. I want the suppression of the Punch and Judy show. I want to stop people being turned into nonentities by other nonentities who 'govern' them. When a neurotic treads for the umpteenth time the same path of failure, recreating for himself and for those around him the same type of misfortune; to help him get out of it is to eliminate the grotesque farce, not the tragedy, from his life. It should help him discern at last the real problems of his life (and any tragic element they may contain) which the neurosis may partly have expressed, but more massively served to mask.

POSTSCRIPT

We are publishing this statement, in this particular issue, as a 'first-person-singular' antidote to the 'Why you should be a socialist' type of propaganda (John Strachey, Gollancz, 1938; Paul Foot, SWP, 1977) now flooding the movement. Bob Potter (3) and P.G. (4) have written excellent critiques of the leninism permeating Foot's political perspectives and shown up his very limited vision of 'socialism'. We here seek to take up an additional criticism.

The marxist left too often sees socialism as the disincarnated fulfilment of the 'logic' or of the 'dialectic' of history. For them, socialism is too often 'the answer to the contradictions of capitalism' or 'the removal of the capitalist brake on the development of the productive forces'. The revolution, for them, is 'not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat, at any moment, considers as its aim'. The question, for marxists, 'is what the proletariat is, and what -consequently on that being - it will be compelled to do' (5) - under the expert guidance, no doubt, of the vanguard party. Our text seeks, on the contrary, to root the vision of a new society not in mechanistic abstractions (or in middle class guilt, or in 'Third World voyeurism'), but in the everyday life of ordinary men and women - here and now.

(3) In ZERO No.1, c/o Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N.1.

(4) In Solidarity-National Working Group No.3, c/o 34 Cowley Rd., Oxford.

(5) The last two quotes are from The Holy Family by K. Marx and F. Engels (FLPH, Moscow 1956, p.53).